

## BRIDGETON LANDFILLS – a perspective by Bridgeton Mayor Conrad Bowers 9/11/14

During the past year there has been much coverage in the media relative to the Bridgeton landfills. My purpose here is to provide a personal perspective. There are two separate but adjacent landfills, the Bridgeton Landfill that has been the source of the odor problems and the subsurface smoldering event (SSE) and the Westlake Landfill that contains the radioactive materials. Also two pending events will have major impacts not only on the City of Bridgeton but the surrounding communities. These events include the construction of an isolation barrier to contain the subsurface smoldering event and the decision for the method of remediation for the radioactive materials.

The City of Bridgeton has no jurisdiction or control over the landfills. Organizations having oversight responsibilities are the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the radioactive site, Westlake Landfill (the Superfund site) and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) for the Bridgeton landfill. Also St. Louis County is involved for certain permitting responsibilities.

Odors emitting from the landfill have been a major problem during the past year. While Republic has made great strides in solving the odor problems associated with the Bridgeton Landfill, I believe that major ongoing efforts are required. Also, an issue that has not been addressed is an additional open and operating landfill a short distance from the Bridgeton Landfill.

The isolation barrier, to contain the SSE, is proposed to be located on or near the site of Westlake Landfill and consequently the EPA will have over-site responsibilities. To EPA's credit they have requested and received assistance from the Corp of Engineers for construction of this barrier. A potential conflict with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations exists. Landfills are considered wildlife attractants and because of potential bird/airplane strikes no open landfill can exist within 10,000 feet of an active runway. In fact, the Bridgeton Landfill was closed to coincide with the opening of the W-1W runway. I haven't seen input from the airport, but opening the Westlake Landfill might require temporary closing of W-1W. Recent announcements indicate that construction of the isolation barrier may not begin for 18 months. My primary concern is when the landfill is opened and the buried materials are exposed during the construction of an isolation barrier there will be a tremendous odor problem. I hope continued monitoring of the SSE will demonstrate that the barrier is not necessary.

A major problem, facing the area, is the final decision for remediating the radioactive material at Westlake. At some point, the EPA will issue its Record of Decision (ROD) for the final remediation of the Westlake radioactive material. The EPA in their Supplemental Environmental Study (January 2012) proposed 3 alternatives: 1) to implement the original 2008 decision to cap the material in place, 2) complete removal of material and transport

to an off-site location, 3) complete removal with on-site disposal. The EPA has not issued a Record of Decision on which of the three alternatives should be implemented. There will be significant opposition regardless of which approach is chosen. Selecting either alternative, which involves moving radioactive materials, will take years to complete. I believe the EPA should immediately release the Record of Decision or provide a date for its release.

Unfortunately, some individuals working to have radioactive materials removed, attempted to close Bridgeton's Municipal Athletic Complex (BMAC) based on speculation and unsubstantiated reports of high levels of radioactivity. The Environmental Protection Agency, The Missouri Department of Natural Resources and the private testing service used by community activists have stated that there are no adverse health hazards associated with the landfill odors and BMAC is safe. Also the EPA has stated that there has been no migration of radioactive materials from the Westlake site. We may all have some issues with government agencies, but I believe that the agencies responsible for testing are being honest with the surrounding communities.

Bridgeton has survived airport expansions and tornados and will survive the landfill problems; however, adverse publicity related to landfill issues has hurt the City. Bridgeton is ideally located and is within easy reach of any location in the metropolitan area and served by major highways (Hwy 70, Hwy 270, Hwy 370, Hwy 170). The city is financially healthy. We constructed a new City Hall in 2011, new public works garage in 2013 and are currently building a new Recreation Center. Our outstanding athletic complex (BMAC) has received national recognition. Bridgeton is served by an outstanding School District (Pattonville). The City of Bridgeton is a great place to live and raise a family.

*Conrad Bowers has served the City of Bridgeton as Mayor since 1987; he is active in the Missouri Municipal League and National League of Cities.*